

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2006

The Honorable Charles Taylor
Chairman
Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
H-150 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

We urge you to support full funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at \$170 million in the Fiscal Year 2007 Interior Appropriations bill. The NEA was last funded at this amount in 1994, and has never recovered from a 40 percent budget cut in FY1996. Today, its programs remain seriously underfunded. The American public wants and needs an affordable investment in the arts.

While the President's FY2007 budget request is level with current FY2006 funding for NEA, the budget request reallocates funds at the expense of some valuable programs. For example, Challenge America ensures that direct grants from the NEA reach underserved populations, including places where opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics or disability. Challenge America uses the arts to enhance America's communities through grants for arts education, youth-at-risk, cultural preservation, community arts partnerships and improved access to the arts for all Americans. Through this program, NEA grants are awarded to artists in almost every Congressional District.

Federal funding for the arts has a ripple effect on our economy, and it is critical to leveraging private funding. An investment in NEA is a great investment in the economic growth of every community. The nonprofit arts industry alone generates \$134 billion annually in economic activity, supports 4.85 million full-time equivalent jobs and returns \$10.5 billion to the federal government in income taxes.

Moreover, the NEA supports life-long learning in the arts which is critical to the development of our children. The NEA's education programs have helped to sustain support in local communities for arts education, which has been proven to help close the education achievement gap as well as to benefit children and adults in many important ways. Kids score higher on their SATs, have greater self-confidence, and are more focused in their studies when they have arts education.

An increase to \$170 million would ensure that the NEA can continue to support the creation, preservation and presentation of the arts in every corner of the country, as well as fund popular

initiatives like *Challenge America*, *American Masterpieces*, *Shakespeare in American Communities*, *Operation Homecoming*, and *Jazz Masters*. Without an increase, the NEA will be unable to maintain or expand programs or undertake new initiatives without diminishing existing programs.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to increase NEA funding to \$170 million in the FY 2007 Interior Appropriations bill. By approving this budget increase, you will strengthen the NEA's ability to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to benefit from the arts. We appreciate your attention to this request, and hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

Louis M. Slaughter

Carolyn McCarthy

Rick Warren

James Sangerin

Liane E. Watson

Wm. C. Echols

Mike Ferguson

Chafee

Zoe Lofgren

Jim Rostenkowski

Ed Case

Wm. Lacy Clay

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Frank LeBorde

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Lucas Harris

Karen Emanuel

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Jim Morrison

Sam Fann

John S. Fann

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Neil Abercrombie

Ben Chandler

Eddie Benitez

Dennis J. Kucinich

Gregory W. Smith

Chris VanHatten

Leonard L. Bannell

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J. M. Christ

C. A. Dutch Kemmerling

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Paul Allen

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